

## CULMSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025 in Culmstock Village Hall 6.30pm

**Present:** Cllrs. Mrs Jude Zebedee (Acting Chairman), C Kay, Sarah Leppard, T Platel, Mrs R Balchin, James Bartlett, Dr C Bass, MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw and the Clerk. Four parishioners were present, one being the P3 Footpath Co-ordinator - two of the parishioners were present from minute 65.

**62.** The Vice-Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from the Chairman of the Parish Council Cllr. Miss Lizzie Jones and Cllr. Simon Clist as DCC and MDDC Councillor.

**63.** On behalf the Chairman the Vice-Chairman Cllr. Mrs Zebedee gave a review of the year:

We are now half way through our four year term and one Parish Councillor has recently stepped down, thank you to Jo Saunders for her service over the last 10 years or so.

Moving on to the rest of the Parish Council I would like to thank everyone for their continuous commitment and hard work. We currently have one vacancy which can be filled by co-option.

The recent DCC elections saw a change – Ray Radford did not stand after many years of being our county councillor. We would like to thank him for his hard work and many years of support with the parish. Ray has been a reliable source for grant funding over the years. We hope that he enjoys a long, happy & healthy retirement. We now look forward to working with our new Devon County Councillor Simon Clist following the recent elections.

Cllr. Clist is already our Mid Devon District Councillor so we are used to working with him alongside Natasha and we all appreciate their support and hard work.

Parish News - we have had another busy year and we are pleased to report that works are soon due to start on the Petanque pistes at the park and pavilion. We all look forward to completion of the project which will be a fantastic facility. Plans are afoot for other improvements including a compost toilet for the site.

We have recently arranged for installation of two new benches. A third will follow hopefully on the proposed community orchard (subject to permission from MDDC).

Highways – we continue to try and keep in touch with our Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO) and several of us had a successful meeting with him last year.

Footpaths - thanks year on year to our P3 team Mike and Roly for their work in looking after our paths. A few of us managed to meet with DCC Footpath Officers late last year which proved useful.

The P3 footpath co-ordinator reported that he would speak to the NHO regarding Great Lane and parking at Hunkin Wood.

Thanks were extended everyone involved with the Parish Council - as well as all of our Parish Councillors and the footpath team there is Melanie our Clerk and Sarah our warden. Also thanks to Mike our First Responder who keeps an eye on the defibrillator.

Continued thanks year on year to everyone for volunteering with various events and helping within numerous organisations. These include the Soap Box Derby, the bell ringers, the grave yard volunteers who work hard to keep the area looking nice, planting shrubs and flowers and enhancing its wildlife potential.

The village hall committee - for organising the successful ceilidh held earlier in the year, the Beacon of Lights - various fundraising events have taken place and the Plant Sale fundraising for the Beacon of Lights, the sports clubs and the flower show which is now running again with a great committee. Reference was also made to the meat draw which is a very popular event and Blackdown Early Music Projects for continuing to bring visitors into the village.

**64. Any from DCC & MDDC Councillors:** (i) MDDC Cllr. Natasha Bradshaw: Recycling - whilst there are some improvements to be made Mid-Devon has one of the highest rates nationally in respect of recycling at approximately 68%. Planning - there have been changes in planning policy nationally and housing targets have increased locally from an annual target of 300+ to 500+ which is challenging. The Local Plan is being reviewed.

Devolution - the government is looking to create unitary councils with proposals due in respect of local government reorganisation to be submitted in November.

Culmstock Parish - (i) LCWIP: A response was submitted some months ago in respect of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) consultation where it was considered that there is an opportunity for consideration of the re-opening of public access along the Culm Valley Light Railway route and to request that it be included either as an eleventh new LCWIP, or that it be appended to the current plans for the Tiverton/Cullompton LCWIP. (ii) Highways: Is there an option for the parish to consider 20's plenty signage.

**65. Any other Reports:**

(i) Annual Report from the Fuel Allotment Charity - The main charity is the Fuel Allotment Charity. Income comes from land owned at Maidendown, Hillmoor and the Blackdown Common (near Upcott), and also from money invested when part of the land at Maidendown was sold to enable the M5 motorway to go through. This meant a substantial amount of money could be invested. It is used for grants to applicants who apply for help towards winter fuel or student grants to help with cost of books/materials etc. Separately another field at Prescott (Shelves Close) which in previous centuries used to be village allotments is now farmed and the income from this field is used as a gift to the eight eldest residents in the parish.

A separate charity is the Bertha Sanders Bequest. This income comes from the interest of £5000 left to the parish years ago by Miss Bertha Sanders (who lived at Moors End, Hillmoor) who stated it should be used to for benefit of the poor and needy. It is fortunate that at this time, no one could be really described as such, so the income is now used a gift to help meet the expenses of organisations locally.

This year £3586 has been distributed to 38 applicants living in the village.

(ii) The Culmstock News - the parish magazine has seen a recent change as the editor has stepped down after five years - it is hoped that a replacement will come forward. Many thanks to Eloise for her hard work over the five years. Two members of the Parish Council are working together to oversee the editing whilst a replacement is found.

**66. Public Participation:** None.

Everyone was thanked for attending and the meeting closed at approximately 7pm.